

UPES

ETHICS COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

July 2025 – June 2026

Submitted to the Governing Body of the University

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Member Secretary, Ethics Committee

1. Executive Summary

This Annual Report presents a consolidated account of the constitution, functioning, and achievements of the UPES Ethics Committee during the period from July 2025 to June 2026. During this period, the Committee held twelve meetings, established a complete governance framework for ethical oversight of the University, and examined and closed three significant cases of misconduct.

The Ethics Committee was constituted with the mandate of promoting integrity, transparency, accountability, and ethical decision-making across the University's academic and administrative functions. Over the course of the year, the Committee approved its Constitution, Terms of Reference, Charter, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), a Complaint Reporting Mechanism, an Ethics Awareness and Capacity Building Plan, and a formal Investigation and Case-Handling Framework.

Three matters of institutional concern were examined and brought to closure during the year: (i) a pattern of attendance manipulation described as "Punch and Go"; (ii) misuse of the University's event budget, including procurement for personal use; and (iii) inflation of internal/mid-semester assessment marks by certain faculty members. In each instance, the Committee followed due process, arrived at proportionate findings, and recommended and oversaw the implementation of both corrective action against those responsible and systemic safeguards to prevent recurrence.

The University also witnessed a change in the Chairpersonship of the Committee during the year, with Dr. Ram Sharma being elevated to the position of Chancellor and Dr. Sunil Rai assuming charge as Vice Chancellor and Chairperson of the Ethics Committee with effect from January 2026.

Looking ahead, the Committee has resolved to transition from an as-needed meeting cadence to a monthly meeting cycle, to strengthen preventive oversight and embed ethical governance as a continuing institutional priority rather than a reactive exercise.

2. Introduction and Background

The UPES Ethics Committee was constituted as a dedicated institutional body to strengthen ethical governance across the University's academic and administrative functions. The Committee held its introductory meeting on 17th July 2025 under the chairpersonship of Dr. Ram Sharma, then Vice Chancellor, with Mr. Manish Madaan, Registrar, serving as Member Secretary.

The Committee was tasked with re-visiting the University's existing Ethics Policy, benchmarking it against peer public and private institutions, and establishing mechanisms to promote ethical conduct, ensure compliance with institutional and regulatory requirements, address ethical concerns raised by faculty and staff, and foster a culture of fairness, professionalism, and respect within the institution.

3. Composition of the Committee

The Ethics Committee comprises the following standing positions and categories of members:

- Chairperson — Vice Chancellor
- Member Secretary — Registrar
- Director, School of Liberal Studies and Media (SOLSM)
- Dean, School of Law
- Professor-level faculty members
- Representative, School of Engineering
- Nominee of the Finance Officer
- External Member (Advocate)
- NGO Representative
- Special Invitee

3.1 Change in Chairpersonship

At the 7th Meeting held on 12th January 2026, the Committee formally recorded that Dr. Ram Sharma, who had served as Vice Chancellor and Chairperson of the Ethics Committee since its constitution, had been elevated to the position of Chancellor of the University. Dr. Sunil Rai assumed charge as the new Vice Chancellor and was welcomed as the new Chairperson of the Ethics Committee. The Member Secretary briefed Dr. Sunil Rai in detail on the Committee's constitution, mandate, prior deliberations, and cases handled to date, ensuring continuity of institutional memory.

4. Mandate, Scope of Work and Objectives

The Scope of Work of the Committee, approved at its 2nd Meeting on 26th August 2025, covers the following areas:

- **Promotion of Ethical Culture** — fostering integrity, transparency, accountability, and fairness, and developing awareness among faculty and staff.
- **Review of Ethical Complaints** — receipt, preliminary scrutiny, recommendation for investigation, and referral to competent authorities where appropriate.
- **Professional Conduct and Workplace Ethics** — examining professional misconduct, abuse of authority, and conflict of interest.
- **Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination** — reviewing concerns involving bias, victimisation, or violation of dignity, in coordination with existing statutory committees.
- **Data Privacy and Confidentiality** — promoting ethical handling of confidential information and recommending safeguards.
- **Advisory and Policy Development** — recommending institutional policies and amendments to strengthen ethical compliance.
- **Capacity Building and Awareness** — organising workshops, seminars, and orientation programmes.

At its 4th Meeting, the Committee finalised the categories of cases falling within its scope: Academic Integrity Violations; Conflict of Interest Matters; Professional Misconduct by Faculty and Staff; Breach of Institutional Ethical Standards; Confidentiality and Data Privacy Violations; and Cases referred by University Authorities involving ethical considerations.

5. Governance Framework Established

During the year, the Committee progressively built out a complete governance framework, summarised below.

5.1 Constitution, Charter and Standard Operating Procedures

The Committee's Constitution, Terms of Reference (ToR), and Charter — including the approved Scope of Work — were formally approved at the 2nd Meeting (26th August 2025), following a benchmarking exercise against comparable national and international, public and private universities. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) covering complaint receipt and registration, preliminary scrutiny, investigation and hearing, documentation, reporting, case closure, and record retention were approved at the same meeting.

5.2 Ethics Complaint Reporting Mechanism

At the 3rd Meeting (15th September 2025), the Committee approved a dedicated Ethics Complaint Submission Portal/Email for receipt of complaints, with provision for anonymous and confidential reporting, defined acknowledgement timelines, and a tracking and monitoring system for complaint status.

5.3 Investigation and Case-Handling Framework

At the 4th Meeting (28th October 2025), the Committee approved an eleven-stage Investigation Flow — from receipt and registration of a complaint, through preliminary scrutiny, Chairperson's approval, constitution of a fact-finding panel, investigation and evidence collection, hearing of parties, submission of the investigation report, Committee review, recommendation to the Competent Authority, and finally closure and record management. Members recommended that defined timelines apply to each stage, that conflict-of-interest declarations be obtained from investigation panel members, and that serious misconduct be eligible for fast-tracking with the Chairperson's approval.

5.4 Ethics Awareness and Capacity Building Plan

Approved at the 3rd Meeting, the plan comprises two ethics awareness sessions per semester, faculty and staff ethics training workshops, orientation sessions for new joiners, an annual Ethics and Integrity Week, and periodic dissemination of awareness materials. At the 7th Meeting, the newly appointed Chairperson, Dr. Sunil Rai, recommended increasing the frequency of these sessions in line with the University's Employee Engagement principles; the Committee accordingly directed HR and IQAC to revise the session calendar so that all faculty and staff attend at least one session per quarter.

5.5 Reporting Framework and Dashboard

The Committee approved a reporting framework comprising periodic (quarterly) reporting of case status to the Competent Authority, an annual consolidated report to the governing body, a confidential case register, and Key Performance Indicators for ethics governance such as average case resolution time, number of awareness sessions conducted, and complaint recurrence rates. This Annual Report is prepared pursuant to that framework.

5.6 Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

All Committee members agreed to maintain strict confidentiality regarding deliberations and records, and to disclose any conflict of interest before participating in case discussions. It was resolved that an annual Declaration of Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest be obtained from all Committee members, with a defined recusal procedure.

6. Meetings Held During the Year

The Committee held twelve meetings during the reporting period, summarised below.

No.	Date	Venue	Principal Agenda
1st	17 Jul 2025	Trust Board Room	; purpose, scope and objectives of the Committee
2nd	26 Aug 2025	Passion Meeting Room	Approval of Constitution, ToR, Charter and SOPs
3rd	15 Sep 2025	Passion Meeting Room	Complaint mechanism, awareness plan, reporting framework, case simulation
4th	28 Oct 2025	Inclusivity Meeting Room	Investigation framework, case categories, Annual Action Plan
5th	17 Nov 2025	Trust Meeting Room	"Punch and Go" attendance matter examined
6th	18 Dec 2025	Trust Board Room	Final disciplinary decision on "Punch and Go" matter
7th	12 Jan 2026	Trust Meeting Room	Change of Chairperson; briefing of new VC; increased awareness session frequency
8th	16 Feb 2026	Passion Meeting Room	Internal assessment marks inflation matter examined
9th	18 Mar 2026	Trust Board Room	Status review of marks-inflation recommendations
10th	6 Apr 2026	Trust Board Room	Event budget misuse / procurement misconduct examined
11th	25 May 2026	Trust Board Room	Status review of event-budget-misuse recommendations
12th	18 Jun 2026	Trust Board Room	Formal closure of all cases; proposal for monthly meeting cadence

7. Cases Examined and Closed During the Year

Three matters of institutional concern were brought before the Committee during the reporting period. All three were examined through the Committee's approved investigation framework and stand fully closed as of the 12th Meeting (18th June 2026).

7.1 Case I — "Punch and Go" Attendance Manipulation

Examined at: 5th Meeting (17 Nov 2025) and 6th Meeting (18 Dec 2025)

A pattern was reported in certain departments whereby faculty members registered card-punch attendance at or near the scheduled class start time, but subsequently left the classroom, arrived significantly late, or otherwise did not deliver the class for its scheduled duration. Verification of class attendance records identified 28 such instances, representing approximately 0.01% of overall academic delivery sessions.

Committee's Observations

The Committee found that the practice amounted to a breach of professional ethics and institutional trust, inconsistent with the University's Code of Conduct, and noted that reliance on card-punch data alone was insufficient to verify actual teaching delivery.

Action Taken

- An institution-wide circular was issued clarifying that punch marks record attendance only and do not, by themselves, constitute delivery of a class.
- Punch logs were cross-verified against class timetables and e-content upload logs on a monthly, random-sample basis.
- Unannounced classroom visits by Heads of Department, Deans, and the Special Committee were introduced.
- Written warning letters were issued to all 28 faculty members found responsible, placed on their service records.
- The current appraisal cycle was treated as a "zero appraisal year" for the concerned faculty members, withholding increments, rating upgrades, and performance-linked benefits.
- Faculty were sensitised through an orientation session on academic integrity and professional ethics.

Status: Closed (confirmed at the 12th Meeting).

7.2 Case II — Misuse of University Event Budget

Examined at: 10th Meeting (6 Apr 2026) and 11th Meeting (25 May 2026)

During routine reconciliation of expenditure for a University event, the Finance Office and Internal Audit Cell identified discrepancies between items procured and items actually utilised. Scrutiny of invoices, purchase requisitions, and delivery records established that a faculty member entrusted with event procurement had procured an item for personal use and caused its cost to be charged to the University's event budget. A broader pattern of laxity in event-related procurement — over-billing, unnecessary procurement, and inadequate documentation — was also observed.

Committee's Observations

The Committee, with confirmation from the Legal Advisor, found that the conduct constituted misappropriation of institutional funds and gross misconduct under the University's Code of Conduct and service rules, meeting the threshold for the strictest disciplinary action, including termination.

Action Taken

- A formal letter of termination was issued to the concerned employee with immediate effect.

- A detailed financial audit of procurement across all University events was conducted.
- The value of items procured for personal use, and other irregular expenditure, was recovered from the employee's final settlement.
- A mandatory pre-approval workflow for event-related procurement was introduced, requiring itemised budget estimates to be approved by the Finance Officer and event in-charge before purchase.
- A University-wide notice was circulated reiterating that University funds may not be used for personal benefit, on pain of strict disciplinary action including termination.
- A sensitisation session on financial propriety and procurement procedure was conducted for staff involved in event organisation.

Status: Closed. As of the 11th Meeting, action on all six recommendations had been initiated by the respective responsible units; full closure was formally recorded at the 12th Meeting.

7.3 Case III — Inflation of Internal / Mid-Semester Assessment Marks

Examined at: 8th Meeting (16 Feb 2026) and 9th Meeting (18 Mar 2026)

Observations by the Controller of Examinations' office and analysis of internal assessment data revealed that certain faculty members had awarded unusually high, and in several cases unwarranted, marks in internal/mid-semester assessments, timed around the student feedback exercise used for faculty appraisal — giving rise to a reasonable inference that marks were inflated to secure favourable feedback rather than to reflect genuine student performance.

Committee's Observations

The Committee found this to be a direct compromise of academic integrity that distorted both faculty appraisal outcomes and the credibility of the University's internal assessment system, while also potentially misleading students about their true academic standing. Given the practice was found across a limited number of faculty members, the Committee opted for a strong written warning coupled with systemic safeguards, as a proportionate first response.

Action Taken

- Written warning letters were issued to all faculty members found to have inflated marks (28 faculty members), placed on their service records.
- Department-level moderation committees were constituted to independently cross-check internal/mid-semester marks.
- Marks were reviewed and, where unjustified, revised in line with examination regulations.
- A screening methodology to flag unusual upward deviations in internal assessment marks was finalised with the Controller of Examinations and IQAC.
- A University-wide notice on academic integrity in internal assessment was circulated, and a refresher session on fair evaluation practices was conducted for all faculty.

Status: Closed (confirmed at the 12th Meeting).

8. Consolidated Case Closure Summary

At the 12th Meeting (18th June 2026), the Committee formally reviewed and recorded the closure of all matters considered during the year:

No.	Case	Final Action	Status
1	"Punch and Go" —biometric attendance marked without conducting classes	Warning letters issued; appraisal cycle treated as zero appraisal year	Closed
2	Misuse of event budget, including procurement of an item for personal use	Concerned employee terminated with immediate effect; procurement safeguards implemented	Closed
3	Inflation of internal / mid-semester assessment marks	Warning letters issued; marks moderated and revised; systemic safeguards implemented	Closed

9. Key Statistics

- Meetings held during the year: 12
- Cases examined and closed: 03
- Faculty members issued warning letters ("Punch and Go"): 28
- Faculty members issued warning letters (marks inflation): Letter issued
- Employees terminated for financial misconduct: 01
- Governance documents approved: Constitution & ToR, Charter, SOPs, Complaint Reporting Mechanism, Investigation Framework, Awareness & Capacity Building Plan, Reporting Framework/Dashboard
- Change in Committee Chairpersonship: 01 (Dr. Ram Sharma to Dr. Sunil Rai, January 2026)

10. Way Forward

At its 12th Meeting, the Committee resolved on the following measures to strengthen its functioning going forward:

1. The Ethics Committee shall meet on a monthly basis, rather than only when a specific matter arises, to enable continuous review of the University's ethical governance framework and emerging risk areas.
2. This monthly review will be undertaken in consultation with the HR Department and the University's leadership team, in keeping with the principle of Employee Engagement.
3. Where a new matter arises for which no process is currently defined in the SOP, it shall first be placed before the Committee for review and recommendation of an appropriate process, which will thereafter be formally incorporated into the SOP ensuring the SOP remains a living document reflecting the Committee's accumulated experience.
4. A standing monthly review template will be prepared, covering the status of open matters, awareness/training activity updates, and emerging risk areas flagged by departments.
5. Records of all closed cases will be consolidated and archived for institutional reference and future training use.

11. Conclusion

The UPES Ethics Committee has established a complete and credible institutional framework for ethical governance spanning policy, complaint-handling, investigation, awareness-building, and reporting while also demonstrating its capacity to examine and resolve real cases of misconduct with fairness, due process, and proportionate consequence. The transition to a monthly meeting cadence positions the Committee to move from a reactive to a preventive mode of oversight in the year ahead, further embedding ethical conduct and institutional integrity into the University's culture.



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